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173 came among them, I could get no more satisfactory answer than that they went to Cartago to buy them. I have been told a vague story, however, that long ago there were two bands living in the country now occupied by the Bri-bris. Those living in the valley, around the junction of the branches of the Tiliri were more powerful than the mountaineers, and forced the latter to pay tribute when they descended to hunt, or cut the material for their bark-cloth clothing. But gradually the lowlanders died out; the highlanders, becoming the more powerful, rebelled against these impositions, and eventually emigrated in such numbers to the country of the former, that the distinction became lost by an amalgamation of the two parties. Even now the Bri-bris, who occupy the lowlands [563] and most of the hill regions of the Sicsola, look down on their neighbors the Cabecars and treat them as inferiors. The Cabecars, on the other hand, tacitly acknowledge even a social supremacy, and in a mixed party submit to assume the more menial occupations, like bringing water and wood; and are always obliged to wait until the last when food or drink is being served. Few of the Bri-bris speak the Cabecar language, but there are few of the Cabecars who do not speak Bri-bri, and they usually [622] use it in the presence of strangers. The Cabecars have no chief of their own, but are entirely under the rule of the Bri-bri chief, and have been, from time immemorial. Their subjugation is, in short, complete. At [793] the same time they have the honor of religious supremacy, in so far as that the high priest, the "*Usekara*," whose office will be explained further on, belongs to their tribe. The ordinary priests, the "*Tsugurs*," who, like the "*Usekara*," are hereditary, come from a group of families on the Coen River, but belong to the Bri-bri tribe.

About the beginning of this century there was a bitter war between the 173 Bri-bris and the Tiribis. The youngest members of the war parties are 721 now mostly dead, and the few remaining survivors are very old men. The last of the warriors proper, mature men at that time, died about 1800, at an extremely advanced age. I have heard the traditions from both sides the question, and of course each party throws all the blame on the other. The Bri-bri story is that some people, a whole family, living on the extreme eastern portion of the Uren district, were found murdered, and no clue discovered to the perpetrators of the act. Not very long afterwards other murders occurred in an equally mysterious manner, which threw the whole country into a state of excitement. Afterwards a small party was attacked by some unknown Indians, a portion killed and some left to tell the tale. The tracks of the strangers were followed through the woods, always keeping to the east, until they were lost. Following this clue, the chief of the Bri-bris sent out a party of armed scouts, who climbed to the summit of the dividing ridge, overlooking the Tilorio. From here they discovered for the first time that they had neighbors; seeing their houses and cornfields in the distance. A large war party was fitted out; they passed the mountains, and without warning descended on the unsuspecting

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enemy, killing large numbers. After this a desultory warfare was kept up; each party striving to take the other unawares, and to capture as many heads as possible. This went on until the Tiribi, reduced to a handful, sued for peace and submitted as a conquered people to the Bri-bris. Since then, the chief of the Bri-bris has always retained the right of final choice of chief of the Tiribis, after nomination of the candidate by his own people. Beyond this, no actual control has ever been exercised. The Tiribi story does not differ from the above, except in the origin. It throws the blame of the first aggression on the Bri-bris. In some respects the Tiribis are superior to the Bri-bris. The children are more respectful to their parents; the women are more modest in dress and behavior, and the men are more industrious. This is their boast, and while they look down on the Bri-bris, the latter despise them as a conquered people. Very little communication occurs between the two tribes, and I could learn of but two cases of intermarriage between them.

I have already said the Tiribis and Cabecars are under the political rule of the Bri-bris. The form of government is extremely simple. One family holds the hereditary right of chieftainship, and up to 1873 the reigning chief had theoretically full powers of government. The succession is not in direct line, but on the death of the incumbent, the most eligible member of the royal family is selected to fill the vacancy. Often a son is passed over in favor of a second cousin of the last chief. The present chief is first cousin of his predecessor, who was nephew of his predecessor, who was in turn a cousin to his.

Formerly the chiefs held only a nominal control over their people. The principal advantages derived from the position were rather of a social than a political nature. The chief was conducted to the best hammock for a seat on entering a house. He was treated to their great luxury, chocolate, when persons of less note were fain to be content with chicha. But in case of a quarrel the chief had to defend himself from the blows of the long, heavy fighting-stick like any ordinary mortal. Within the last decade or two, the traders, by throwing their influence on the side of the chief, have caused him to be treated with more respect, and endowed him with the attributes of a judge over his people, in all ordinary disputes. About 1870 or 1871, Santiago, the then chief, paid a visit to Cartago and San José; was well treated, and received an appointment from the Government, for the position which he already held, with the full approval of his tribe. It had been customary for the heir-apparent, the future successor, to hold a position as second, or subordinate chief, with little or no authority. One Lapiz was at that time second chief, and claimed that he was more entitled than the other to the chieftainship. Exaggerated ideas of great mineral wealth in "Talamanca" have been long held in Costa Rica and the Commandant of Moen, a little settlement on the Atlantic coast, used principally as a penal station, conspired with Lapiz against Santiago. This individual, named Marchena, advised Lapiz to assassinate his chief, and thereby place himself at the head of the tribe.

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It seems that Marchena's plan was to put a creature of his own over the Indians, so as to gain access to the supposed rich mines and thereby benefit himself. Instigated by a "Christian," the savage, nothing loth, conspired with his people, but Santiago learned of it and made efforts to arrest him. Learning of this, he fled to the mountain fastnesses of Bri-bri where, broken down by disease and hardships he died, leaving, Indian like, his revenge as a legacy to his adherents. Santiago, who was a drunkard and, when intoxicated, a tyrant, gradually estranged his people from him, and his relatives, Birche and Willie, placed themselves at the head of the opposition. The occasion sought for was not long in being found, and one morning Santiago was shot in the woods by an ambushed party, who at once took possession of the government, burnt their victim's house, appropriated his effects, including his three wives, and defied his friends. Birche, as the oldest of the two cousins and claimants to the chieftainship, took precedence and Willie became second chief. Mr. John H. Lyon, an American from Baltimore, who had lived in the country since 1858, had acted as secretary to Santiago, and only their respect for an upright man who had always treated them justly, coupled with the fact that he was not a "Spaniard," prevented them from venting their resentment on him, in common with the other friends of the murdered man. He remained at his house for some weeks despite the storm. But at last, thinking discretion the better part of valor, he left the country with his Indian family and remained absent some months. On his return he found matters settled after a fashion: the Birche party in power, but by no means secure against an outbreak from the friends of Santiago, who only wanted a leader. They urged Lyon to head them but his better council prevailed, and they perforce accepted the situation. I visited the country first in March, 1873, accompanied by the Commandante of Limon, Don Federico Fernandez. He then formally approved of Birche as chief, Willie as second, and re-appointed Lyon as Secretary. This was a great step in advance for Birche who now, for the first time, felt himself secure. The assassination of Santiago was practically ignored, but they were told "to be good and not do it again." This was succeeded by an infinite number of petty quarrels between the two chiefs; each disliking the other, and each wishing the other out of the way. By dint of constant interference on the part of the foreigners, they were prevented from coming into actual collision, although one attempt was made by the friends of Willie to kill Birche, Lyon, myself and my assistants at a blow by planting an ambush for us on one of our journeys. However, in December, 1873, business taking me to San José, I induced Birche to accompany me. On my advice, Don Vicente Herrera, the Minister of Interior, gave to Birche a formal commission as "Jefe Politico" of Talamanca, confirmed Willie as second chief, and appointed Mr. Lyon "Secretary and Director of the tribes," fixing suitable salaries for each. This was the first time that the tribe had formally submitted to the Costa Rican government. The action of Santiago was purely an in-

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dividual affair, and looked on with great disfavor by the tribe. Matters went on very well for a few months under the new regime. But Birche, a man of little capacity, at the same time a coward and a tyrant, could not be content with his position. He began a system of ill treatment against which the people grumbled, but which they feared to resent. At first both Lyon and myself tried to quiet the complaints, believing that punishment had been justly inflicted, and knowing that

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> "No man e'er felt the halter draw
> With just opinion of the law,
> Or held with judgment orthodox
> His love of justice in the stocks."

But it soon became apparent that his majesty (they are always called king) was abusing his power. The Indians dared not quarrel with Birche, for fear of offending the government, but came to Lyon almost daily with complaints. At last we decided to effect a change. Birche went to Limon to draw his salary, and at the same time to complain of a purely personal quarrel with Willie, in which he had fared worst. I arrived there a few days later, having completed my exploration, and being on my way to the Capital. On being asked for information and advice by the Commandante, I told the story and urged his removal. This could only be done by the minister, but he was suspended until the decision of that officer could be obtained. In a few days I saw Mr. Herron, and after a conversation he decided to endorse the Commandante's action. Birche was accordingly removed, Willie was given a nominal chieftainship, and Lyon instructed to assume all responsibilities. Thus in less than two years the people have, without knowing how it happened, been deprived of their hereditary chiefs, and a foreigner placed over them. Willie remains with the empty title of chief without even the power to issue an order or punish an offender, except when ordered by Lyon. This gentleman has their entire confidence and respect, and many of the Indians begged to have even the title taken away permanently from the "royal" family. I have been thus prolix on this branch of the subject, because I was an eye witness, a participator, in the latter part of the events I relate. Trivial as they are, they may interest some, throwing light on the manner in which one tribe after another is subdued. [123]

A strange fatality seems to hang over these Isthmian Indians. Even when not brought into contact with the debasing influences of civilization, the tribes are visibly diminishing. Less than two centuries ago, the population of Talamanca, as Costa Rica calls her southeastern province, was counted by thousands, now barely 1200 souls can be found. The Shelaba tribe is extinct; the Changinas are at the point of extermination, the Tiribis number but one hundred and three souls, and Lyon tells me that the Cabecars of the Coen have diminished fully one-half within the last seventeen years, while the decrease in the Bri-bris is hardly less rapid. 161

During my travels in Talamanca I collected in each district an accurate 124 161

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to a stranger except when spoken to, and then reply in as few words as possible and with apparent bashfulness. 291

For ornaments, all wear necklaces. The favorite ones are made of teeth, of which those of the tiger are most highly prized. Only the canine teeth are used. Small strings are sometimes made of monkey, coon, or other teeth, but are not much thought of. I have seen one of these made of five strings of tiger teeth, gradually diminishing in size, and covering the entire breast of the wearer. The women rarely, almost never, wear these. If they wear teeth, they are of some very small animal. In place of them, they use great quantities of glass beads. I have seen fully three pounds of beads around the neck of one old woman, and she was the envy of all her friends and neighbors. Even little girls are often so loaded down that the weight must be irksome to them. Money is often worn by the women. On one occasion I paid a man six dollars, all in Costa Rican quarters, for his month's work. After a few days I went to his house and saw the entire sum strung on his wife's neck. Shells are also sometimes, though rarely used. The men sometimes carry, suspended from the necklace, the shell of a small species of *murex*, with the varices ground off and a hole drilled in it to make a whistle. These are bought in Terraba, and are highly prized. 301 [237]

The men sometimes wear head dresses made of feathers. The most highly prized are the white downy feathers from under the tail of the large eagle. Others are made from chicken feathers, or are worked in rows of blue, red, black, yellow, &c., from the plumage of small birds. I have seen one head-dress made of the long hair from the tail of the great ant-eater, in the place of feathers. The feathers are secured vertically to a tape and extend laterally so as to reach from temple to temple, curling over forward at the top, the tape being tied behind, so as to keep the hair in place. 237 301

Painting is somewhat in vogue, to assist in the adornment of the person, but is not confined to either sex. The commonest manner is to color each cheek with a square or parallelogram, about an inch across, either solid or made up of bars. This is done with the dark reddish-brown sap of a certain vine, and the pattern resists wear and tear, and water for a week or more. Anatto is also used, but more rarely, and is applied in bars or stripes to the face, according to the skill or taste of the artist. Besides, a hideous indigo-blue stain from a fruit, is sometimes smeared on the face or body, but even savage taste does not seem to approve of this, since it is very unusual. 302 386

Formerly the Tiribis tattooed small patterns on their faces or arms; but the younger people have not kept up the custom, and the Bri-bris and Cabecars say they never did it. The chiefs on great occasions wear gold ornaments, similar to those now found in the *Huacas*, or graves of Chiriqui. Whether these have been recovered from some of these graves, or whether they have been handed down from time immemorial is not known. There are but four or five in the tribe, and two of these belong 304 301 622

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622 301 [727] [422] to the reigning chief. The others were formerly also property of the chiefs, but are said to have been given as rewards of merit to the most successful leaders in the Tiribi war. The two belonging to the chief, as well as one belonging to the descendants of one of those warriors, all represent birds. The people call them eagles. The largest is between three and four inches across; the smaller of the chief's two, is double-headed. In connection with these "eagles" another royal emblem might 293 be mentioned. It is a staff of hard black palm wood, over four feet long. 622 The top is carved in the shape of an animal, not unlike a bear sitting on [532] his haunches. But there are no bears in this country, and it must have been intended for some other animal. Below this figure, the stick is square, and is carved out into four pillars several inches long, with spaces between them. In the interior, between them, is a cavity in which a loose piece of the same wood can be shaken about. It was evidently left there in the carving, after the fashion of the Chinese. Below this, the stick is plain. I tried every means in my power to obtain this, but could not buy it.

525 Games of chance or of skill are equally unknown, and even when brought into contact with civilization, they do not seem to take kindly to gambling. In fact, they have so little to win or lose, and that little is so easily obtained, that the inducement does not exist.

262 Their food is simple in material and there is but little variation in the manner of preparation. Of meats, besides chickens, they have beef and pork, which are however rarely used except at feasts. They know nothing of salt- [257] ing meat for future use and can only consume one of these animals when a large number is together. Besides the scarcity of beef is so great that probably no Indian possesses more than one or two animals at a time. [224] Wild meat, like peccary, red monkey, (the other species are rarely eaten,) tapir, tiger, even otter, armadillo, and some other small animals are oc- [25] casionally shot. In this case, all of the meat that is not eaten at once is dried as hard as a bone, and perfectly black, in the smoke of a slow fire. Larger species of birds like curassow are also treated in the same way. It is an interesting fact, universally attested, that the bones of this bird are absolutely poisonous to dogs, while the meat, though tough, is not unpalatable and is perfectly innoxious to man. After a meal it is the never-failing custom to gather all the bones carefully, and either burn them or place them out of reach of the dogs. I do not know whether the flesh would be equally dangerous, though I doubt if it was ever wasted on a dog. This property is said to be due to some fruit or seed they eat. Of vegetable food, plaintains are the staple. In times of scarcity, bananas take their place, besides being eaten raw when ripe. The Indians also occasionally eat a raw ripe plantain, although they are coarse 252 and the flavor is inferior. The methods of preparation are, roasted green, when they make a poor substitute for bread; roasted ripe, when they are eaten with chocolate, with the idea of sweetening it. They are also boiled green, with meat, with green corn, or even alone. Ripe plan-

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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Bribri

293 757 astringent properties said to be contained in the wood, and they are sometimes scraped and the scrapings drunk with water as a curative. It is supposed to stop bleeding, and is also valued for intestinal ailments.

• [622] Formerly they may have been the property only of the headmen.

293 A stick once owned by Ramón's father, the old "king," was in the custody of Señor Alejo Jimenez, governor of Talamanca, who lives at Saporio. It was taken by the Bribri from a neighboring tribe, probably the Tiribi, in war, many years ago, and the Indians are very anxious lest it should pass out of their hands, since they say, "It cost us blood." This staff was seen by Gabb,[16] who states:

[532] "It is a staff of hard black palm wood, over four feet long. The top is carved in the shape of an animal, not unlike a bear sitting on his haunches. But there are no bears in this country, and it must have been intended for some other animal. Below this figure the stick is square, and is carved out into four pillars several inches long, with spaces between them. In the interior, between them, is a cavity in which a loose piece of the same wood can be shaken about. It was evidently left there in the carv-

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Bribri

ing, after the fashion of the Chinese. Below this, the stick is plain. I tried every means in my power to obtain this, but could not buy it." 293

The stick, which was seen by the writer, is still unobtainable.

Gold Ornaments.—Pendants of gold were formerly worn as chiefs' insignia, and, it is said, were also given to successful partisans in the Tiribi war. They are now nearly a thing of the past, as the whites have long eagerly sought and purchased them. These ornaments were made in the form of eagles (sometimes double-headed), alligators, and frogs, and were worn as breast-plates or gorgets. They no doubt were entirely similar to the antique forms from the graves at Las Mercedes. Señor Ricardo Fernandez Guardia[17] reproduces a photograph of Antonio Saldaña, father of Ramón and last "king" of the Bribri, with several large gold eagles round his neck. These eagles are also noted by Gabb.[18] 301 [622]

As the Bribri believe that death will overtake the Indian owner who sells one of these gold ornaments, it may be that there are really more of them in existence than the 784. [763]